Historical Address

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Rev. Albert F. Pierce,

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HISTORICAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

REV. ALBERT F. PIERCE,

AT THE

TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

AND THE

FIRST ECCLESIASTICAL SOCIETY,

OF DANBURY, CONN.,

HELD IN THE CHURCH

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27TH,

1896.

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HISTORICAL ADDRESS.

In preparing this historical sketch, I have encountered two difficulties;

First—the meagreness of the sources of information, the early records of the church and of the society having been lost.

Secondly—the ground has already been covered. Mr. Thomas Robbins in his century sermon has given us about all we know concerning the early history, and Rev. Mr. Hough, in his most admirable discourse preached in 1876, has recorded about all the additional points of special interest. Still, I have chosen to go over very much of the same ground, for the sake of strangers and of the young people who are not familiar with the old story.

The history of the Ecclesiastical society properly begins with the granting of the charter by the Legislature, May 14, 1696; but the history of the church reaches further back.

The settlement of the town began in 1684, and it is to this date that we must look for the germs of the church.

The settlement of a new town was primarily for temporal gain; families moved from the old home to the new quarters in order that they might take up claims and increase their temporal benefit, but they never lost sight of the religious idea. When a town was founded, in a sense a church was also established. As Abraham, when he arrived at Bethel, and again at Hebron, erected the altar and offered sacrifices unto his God, so our fathers, in their new homes, immediately established the altar and organized themselves for praise and worship. Thus the beginnings of the church must be found in the very settlement of the town, though it was not until some years afterward that it took unto itself permanent form.

Because of this intimate relation existing between the two, the history of the church becomes the record of the town. The first settlers arrived in Danbury in 1684, though most of their families did not come until the ensuing spring. The town was surveyed and constituted in 1687. There have been contradictory statements on this point. Mr. Robbins, in his famous century sermon, says that "The town was surveyed in February, 1693, by John Platt and Samuel Hayes, of Norwalk." Dr. Hough in his anniversary sermon evidently follows the statement of Mr. Robbins: but Hon. Lyman D. Brewster, of this city, in 1886 made a careful survey of the Colonial records, and showed conclusively that Danbury was constituted in 1687. I I quote from his article published in THE DANBURY NEWS: "There was, to be sure, a survey of Danbury made by order of the General Court in 1693, but it was a resurvey, not the original survey of the town: but in 1692 the General Assembly enlarged the town, changing its length from six to eight miles and at the same time ordered a new survey, which was returned to the General Court in 1693 and confirmed by the court in 1702." It was this resurvey that misled both Mr. Robbins and Dr. Hough in thinking that the

town was originally constituted at the latter date.

While the church perhaps did not take organized form until 1695, yet no doubt religious services were more or less regularly held from the beginning of the settlement. The nearest town with which the first settlers had natural intercourse was Norwalk. Evidently it would be quite impossible for them to attend services there; and their religious ardor and enthusiasm would lead them to establish services of their own.

While seeking the facts in reference to the beginning of the church it will be interesting to know something of the social and civil condition of the State at this time. From the report of the General Court to a British Commission in 1680 we find that there were but four counties in the state. These contained twenty-one churches. "The ministerial stipend was from fifty to one hundred pounds." "There was one fort at the mouth of the Connecticut." "The principal towns were Hartford, New London, New Haven and Fairfield." "Their buildings were generally wood, but some of stone and brick," and were comely for a wilderness. "The State had about twenty petty merchants trading with Boston, other colonies and the West Indies," and the property of the entire colony did not reach six hundred thousand dollars. Three years previous to this there were only two thousand five hundred and eighty-seven men in the entire state. The report goes on to say: "The people were principally strict Congregationalists, a few 'large Congregationalists', and some moderate Presbyterians. There were four or five Seven Day men and about as many Quakers. Labor was four shillings six pence a day, wheat four shillings a bushel, peas three shillings, Indian corn two shillings six pence, pork three pence per pound and butter six pence." "Beggars were not suffered, but when discovered were bound out to service." These quotations give us some idea of the conditions of the people, and of their religious proclivities, though what is the meaning of "large Congregationalists" one can only surmise.

Perhaps it refers more to liberality of ideas than largeness of physical proportion, and in these days they might be termed New Theology men. If the same course should be followed to-day in reference to beggars and vagabonds as is here recorded, we should all of us have as many servants or bondmen as we could use.

It was at this time that the new church at Danbury was established. In seeking to follow its particular line of history, I shall treat it in a topical rather than chronological order.

Let us therefore begin with the externalities, and look first at the homes in which the church has lived.

There have been in all four meeting houses. The first was erected in 1695, the year before the granting of the charter to the society. This edifice stood "on the Towne street"—now Main street—a little north of where the Court House now stands. Its dimensions were 30x40 feet. It is an undisputed tradition that "every person belonging to the town was present at the raising and sat on the sills at once."

This emphasizes the sparsely settled condition of the town and the interest of the people in its religious affairs. In the year 1719 this first and rude edifice gave place to another which was somewhat larger and more pretentious, being 35x50 feet. It occupied the same site as the building it replaced. The natural growth of the town and the successful ministry of the Rev. Mr. White necessitated the enlargement of the second meeting house in 1745. Fifteen feet were added to the front, making it 65 feet long. This second edifice, enlarged, continued to serve the religious needs of the church until the year 1786. It has been quite a current notion that this meeting house was burned by the British in 1777, but the latest researches show that the only meeting house destroyed at that time was the one known as the "New Danbury," erected by the followers of Rev. Mr. White.

THIRD MEETING HOUSE, ERECTED 1785.

The third meeting house was located at the foot of West street, where the soldiers' monument now stands. The building was 45x60 feet, and had a spire 130 feet high at the Main street front; the principal entrance was on the south side, the pulpit being opposite on the north side. The frame work of the edifice was raised in October, 1785, and enclosed the next year. While outwardly the building was sufficiently comely for the times, the inside appearance was in accord with the dignified notions of the day. The pulpit was large and heavy and had above it a sounding board. Galleries ran around three sides of the room. In the center of the main floor were seats, and about these were several rows of high box pews according to the old time designs and custom.

The scene outside was very different from what it is to-day. Main street was then a country road in what is now the center of the city, and West street was another country road running into it. Deer Hill avenue was a cow path, and the greater part of Main street in the neighborhood was ploughed land and meadow. When the present edifice was built this old church, the third meeting house, became a place of amusement and was named Concert Hall. Later, cells were built in the basement, and the place was used as a lockup for the town. In 1878 the building was removed, and at the present time is used as a livery stable on Main street near the Catholic church.

The fourth meeting house, the one in which we now worship, was erected during the pastorate of Rev. Mr. Coe and was dedicated Wednesday, April 28th, 1858.

Its extreme dimensions are 80x140 feet, having a gallery on three sides of the audience room, and a seating capacity of about nine hundred. The spire which adorns it is considered one of the finest in all New England, and has been said by competent judges to be without an equal in the State of Connecticut. It stands two hundred feet high, and is of very graceful proportions.

The cost of the structure was about eighteen thousand dollars in addition to four thousand dollars paid for the lot.

During the ministry of Rev. Dr. Hubbell the present chapel was erected. At the same time extensive improvements were made in the church edifice, the galleries being divided into family apartments and the organ removed from the front of the edifice to the rear of the pulpit. The size of the chapel is 40x80, and together with

the improvements cost eighteen thousand dollars.

In 1892, during the present pastorate, an addition was built to the chapel to give increased facilities for Sunday-school work, and the basement rooms were altered, furnishing a large dining room with a kitchen and all necessary adjuncts for the social life of the church. These changes were made at a cost of five thousand dollars, all of which was provided for at the time.

The church was not provided with a chapel or even a conference room until the year 1830 when, under the pastorate of Mr. Rood, the second story of the building, that stands next south of the old Baptist church on Main street, was rented at $30 per year for that purpose. The social meetings of the church were held in this room until 1837, when the meeting house, afterwards known as Concert Hall, was raised up, and a conference room made in the basement.

When the present structure was built, the basement was used for Sunday school and prayer meeting purposes until 1882, when the chapel was erected.

The first parsonage owned by the church was purchased of the estate of Rev. Ebenezer Baldwin who was very patriotic in his sentiments, and besides urging upon his people the duty of sustaining their country, he himself went to the front in 1776. While in the army he made and sent home a will. It is dated Sept. 10, 1776, and is prefaced with the following words, "Mindful of the uncertainty of life at all times, and of the special danger of life when engaged in war, I think it proper to make this my last will and testament." He then proceeds, "Whereas, I have been in the ministry but a few years, and have received from the First Society in Danbury a considerable settlement, I would willingly refund a part of it, but as it has been wholly expended in a house and lot, 'tis not in my power unless the Society will make a purchase of it. I do therefore will and bequeath to the First Society in Danbury my dwelling house, barn and home lot which have cost me between £500 and £600 in case they will pay to my executors the sum of £360." The society purchased the property on the conditions stated. The house stood on the site now occupied by the parsonage of the Methodist church. The house was retained until 1786, when it was sold and realized a little over one thousand dollars which became the nucleus of the church fund. (This fund has since been increased until it amounts to $10,000.) So far as I am able to learn, this was the only parsonage owned by the church until about 1840.

Mr. Shove lived in his own house which was situated on an eminence near the present Court House. In 1707, during the French and Indian hostilities, this house along with the house of Samuel Benedict was fortified for defense.

The Rev. Israel Ward, pastor from 1803 to 1810, resided on West street, (then called Lousy Lane,) at the corner of Harmony, in the house now owned and occupied by Miss Rebecca Starr Dibble.

Miss Dibble's grandfather, Samuel C. Dibble, purchased the property of the widow of Mr. Ward. Sometime during the pastorate of Mr. Ward, a wing was built on the west end of the property for the use of the Fairfield East Consociation. In this, stated meetings were held and the records of the Consociation kept. On the north side of this room, a little recess was built to receive a handsome sideboard, made of mahogany and inlaid with beautiful work. This piece of furniture is now in the possession of Miss Dibble.

The second parsonage owned by the church was located on Main street, near Bank. About the year 1840, four of the church members, David Foote, Darius Starr, Russell Hoyt, and Deacon Eli T. Hoyt made a present of the house and lot to the society. It cost about $2,000. After the present parsonage was built, this old parsonage was sold to Byron Dexter, who now resides in it at 140 Main street.

The third parsonage was erected in

1888, during the pastorate of Dr. Maxwell. It occupies the place where the horse sheds once stood in the rear of the chapel and cost, aside from the value of the land, about $10,000.

The first pastor of the church was Rev. Seth Shove. He was born in Taunton, Mass., January 29, 1669. What little we know of his early life, we are indebted to the diary of Captain Samuel Sewell. Mr. Shove was the son of Rev. George Shove, minister at Taunton, from 1665 to 1687. His mother was Hopestill, daughter of Rev. Samuel Newman, a learned man, the distinguished minister of Rehobeth. When young Seth was in his ninth year, he was sent to Boston to live with a Mr. Hull.

Four days after his arrival, he met with a peculiar accident which nearly deprived this church of its first minister. Capt. Sewell says: "In the evening seeing a shagged dogg in the kitchen, I spake to John Alcock, 'I am afraid we shall be troubled with the ugly dogg,' whereupon John asked which way he went. I said out at the street door. He presently went that way, and meeting Seth who went out a little before, took him for the dogg and smote him so hard upon the bare head with a pipe staff or something like it that it grieved me he had strook the dogg so hard. It was God's mercy the stick and manner of the blow was not such as to have spilled his brains upon the ground." Mr. Sewell adds: "The devil, I think, seemed to be angry at the child's coming here."

Mr. Shove graduated from Harvard in 1687, being of a class of eleven. In 1691 he set out for Simsbury, Conn., where he became pastor of the church. In the following winter, the town gave him a formal call to settle with them in the ministry which was accepted, but the records do not show that he was ever ordained over the society as pastor. He continued to preach, however, until 1695. From Simsbury he came to Danbury, and was settled over this church in 1696, and labored to the day of his death, October 3, 1735. His body lies buried in Wooster cemetery.

The second pastor was Ebenezer White, who was ordained March 10, 1736. For twenty-five years Mr. White preached with great acceptance, and universal harmony prevailed between him and the people. "The people of the town were considered by all the neighboring towns as eminent for morality and religion, for regularity of conduct, and constant attendance on the institutions of Christianity." During the latter part of his pastorate Mr. White changed his theological views. In 1763, he was complained of to the Association "as holding and teaching false doctrine" and presented to the council of the Consociation for trial. The council met August 1st of that year, but the majority of the church which sustained Mr. White objected to the authority of the council on the ground that the church was not amenable to any outside body. The objection was not allowed, and after a five days' session the result reached was "that Mr. White should have a three months' probation to see if he would not preach to the acceptance of his hearers." The result, however, was not satisfactory, and a joint council of both the Fairfield Consociations was called on January 3 of the following year. Mr. White still denied the jurisdiction of the council, but he was found guilty of heresy, and put on probation until March when he was finally dismissed from his pastorate under censure. The majority of the church sustaining Mr. White formed a new organization which was called "the New Danbury Church." They built a meeting house in 1768, which was burned in 1776 when Danbury was destroyed by the British. His son, Rev. Ebenezer Russell White, in 1768, became associate pastor with his father. In 1779, Rev. Ebenezer White died, and it was not long thereafter that the "New Danbury Church" became extinct. The council which dismissed Mr. White from the pastorate recognized the minority as being the first consociated church in Danbury, thus continuing it in the line of succession.

The third pastor of the church was Mr. Noadiah Warner, who was ordained in February, 1765, and dismissed in 1768. His pastorate was brief and much interfered with because of the efforts to secure the return of the followers of Mr. White. On two occasions he relinquished his pulpit for several months that candidates might be listened to by both parties, with the understanding that if one were found acceptable to both, Mr. Warner would resign in his favor. But little is known of Mr. Warner, yet he seems to have been highly esteemed by the people.

The next pastor was Mr. Ebenezer Baldwin, who came in the summer of of 1770, and was formally settled Sept. 19 of that year. The sermon of ordination was preached by Pres. Dag ett of Yale college. Mr. Baldwin's pastorate extended over a space of only six years, but his ministry was as eminent perhaps as that of any who have ever served the church. He was a scholar of marked ability, and while his style of preaching was simple, it was earnest and forcible, and given with the most commanding and graceful dignity and manner. The service which he rendered at the beginning of the Revolution in inspiring the people with the spirit of patriotism and the claims of the country upon their services was very marked. He wrought by both voice and pen, and later lent the inspiration of his own example.

One sermon preached in 1775 obtained great celebrity. So excellent and appropriate was it that it was printed at the expense of a leading member of the Episcopal church, and a copy of it is preserved in the archives of the Historical Society of New York. Mr. Baldwin taught in Yale college four years before he was settled in Danbury. He never lost the spirit of learning, and was much interested in the general education of the people. Soon after his settlement in Danbury, he organized a public library "that should be free to all denominations." The benefits of this movement were immediately felt, and as a result, the inhabitants were soon enabled to exhibit one of the best town libraries in the state. Disaster however soon overtook the movement. In the conflagration of the town when burned by the British, all of the books excepting a few which were out were consumed. "It remained in such a mutilated state till 1795 when it was dispersed."

During Mr. Baldwin's pastorate he married 68 couples, baptized 113 children and attended 149 funerals. In the summer of 1775 he officiated at 62 funerals in the three months of June, July and August.

After an interval of ten years, Mr. Timothy Langdon was ordained over the church. Early in his ministry a roll of the membership was made out, from which it appears that the number was only sixty-three. During the fifteen years of his ministry there were added only forty-four, which would seem to indicate not only the distracted condition of the public mind after the long period of the war, but a season of religious dearth. Mr. Langdon married 93 couples, baptized 82 children and attended 69 funerals. His pastorate, which was his first, was terminated by death Feb. 10, 1801.

The next pastorate extended over a period of seven years, Mr. Israel Ward being ordained May 25, 1803, and serving the church until his death, August 3, 1810. His death was the result of sickness caused by sitting upon the ground when heated by work in getting the hay from the parsonage meadow.

Upon the church records is made this entry: "Aug. 3d, 1810. It has pleased God in His wise providence this morning to remove by death our late beloved pastor, the Rev. Israel Ward, in which this church is called to mourn the loss of a faithful, wise, zealous and godly minister of His word. As a proof of his love and zeal in the cause of his Saviour and of his instrumentality in winning souls to Christ, the records in the book of admissions of hopeful converts to full communion may be seen, when in the

course of his ministry of only seven years, two months and nine days, one hundred and forty-six were received into the bosom of the church."

Rev. William Andrews became pastor of the church June 30, 1813. Dr. Hough speaks of him as being the first pastor of the church who did not begin his ministry here. We have shown, however, that this distinction belongs to the first pastor, Rev. Seth Shove. Mr. Andrews came from Windham, Conn.

There seems to have been considerable feeling occasioned by his leaving his former pastorate, and this matter is publicly referred to in the installation sermon which was preached at the time of his settlement here. Dr. Hough makes a long quotation from this sermon, from which quotation we would infer that great plainness of speech was a characteristic of old time preaching. Mr. Andrews' pastorate will ever be a memorable one if for no other reason than the large number of trials which came before the church. Shortly after beginning his work, a day of fasting and prayer was appointed "on account of the sins of church members and the coldness of the church." (From the reputation which our church bears for coldness, one might reasonably infer that the prayers offered on this occasion were not very effectual). A committee on discipline was appointed, which a week later began its work by formulating charges against one of the members of the church; and from this time forward until the close of the pastorate not less than four-fifths of the church records are accounts of church discipline. The feeling engendered by these cases of discipline finally led to the dismission of Mr. Andrews. In general the church stood by and sustained their pastor, while the larger part of the society was opposed to him. A compromise was effected by Mr. Andrews' resigning his office as pastor, the society agreeing to pay him in addition to all salary due, the sum of $900. The church acquiesed in the arrangement for the sake of peace, and the money was raised by the sale of the parsonage meadow.

Notwithstanding the excitement of the many cases of discipline, which marked his stay here, Mr. Andrews' pastorate, in many respects, was a very fruitful one. 1815 and 1816 were years of revival to the church, twenty-three and twenty-four being added respectively in those years.

During his ministry, Mr. Andrews baptised 184 children. From the record that in one instance seven, in another eight, and in another ten children belonging to the same family were baptised the same day, it would appear that children of older years must have been included in the number, although they are all recorded as cases of *infant* baptism.

Dr. Hough says: "Of Mr. Andrews' six sons, three born in Danbury bore the names of his immediate predecessors, Israel Ward, Timothy Langdon and Ebenezer Baldwin. (It seems natural to conjecture that if the olive plants about his table had been sufficiently numerous, the family record would have included also a Noadiah Warner, an Ebenezer White and a Seth Shove.)" Five of Mr. Andrews' sons entered the ministry and were men of ability and reputation, one, Israel Ward Andrews D.D., LL.D., being president of Marietta college, Ohio.

Mr. Andrews was dismissed May 29th, 1826, and became pastor of the church in Cornwall, Conn., which position he filled until his death, Jan. 1st, 1838.

Three years intervened before the settlement of another pastor, when Mr. Anson Rood was ordained to the office April 23, 1829. After a pastorate of nearly nine years, Mr. Rood resigned his office, and for the next ten years had a charge in Philadelphia, Penn. He died at his residence in West Philadelphia in January, 1858. Some time before the close of Mr. Rood's pastorate, he secured Rev. Rollin S. Stone to assist him in some revival meetings, and upon Mr. Rood's dismission the church, without hearing other candidates, gave Mr. Stone a call to the pastorate. This he accepted and was in-

stalled Jan. 31, 1838. During the twelve years that he served the church two hundred and eight persons were added to the membership. Mr. Stone was greatly beloved by the church, their unanimity in him being manifest in their action upon his letter of resignation as pastor. January 23, 1849, he sent a request to the church to unite with him in calling the consociation to dissolve the pastoral connection between them. The church adjourned, for deliberation, and at its next meeting requested Mr. Stone to withdraw his communication. This, he declined to do, whereupon the church voted not to comply with his request. Feb. 11th, the church was requested to tarry after service, when Mr. Stone renewed his request. The church again adjourned for deliberation and at its next meeting, after expressing their sorrow, voted, "That although we highly esteem our pastor, and deeply regret that any cause whatever should exist to render his dismissal expedient, we will comply with his request, hoping that God may so overrule this event that both his usefulness and the church's prosperity may be promoted." At a meeting of the consociation held March 13, the church made such representations to the council that it was voted not expedient to dissolve the connection between the pastor and people. One year later, Mr. Stone again presented his resignation, which was finally accepted and he was formally dismissed Feb. 12, 1850. He subsequently had charge of the church at East Hampton, Mass., and was for several years City missionary in Brooklyn, N. Y. The last years of Mr. Stone's life were spent in Hartford, and though many years had intervened since his dismission as pastor, the esteem in which he was held was manifest in a Christmas gift which the Church annually made. Among the raciest letters it has ever been my privilege to read were those which Mr. Stone wrote to the church in response to these gifts. After a lingering illness he passed away in Hartford, and his body was brought to this city for burial. Tuesday, March 12, 1895, it was the privilege of the present pastor to conduct the funeral service in the chapel of the church, after which his body was laid to rest in Wooster cemetery.

Following Mr. Stone, came Rev. Samuel G. Coe, who was installed pastor Dec. 4, 1850. President Woolsey, of Yale college, preached the installation sermon. It was deemed so admirable a statement of the authority which a pastor may rightfully claim, that the consociation put it into printed form. Mr. Coe was pastor during the greater part of the Civil war, and his sermons and addresses contributed not a little to inspire true patriotism in the hearts of this community. One result of this was seen in the fact that of those who enlisted in the army from this town about fifty were connected with this congregation. During the fourteen years of his pastorate, over and above losses by death and dismission, there was a gain of 140 in the membership.

Mr. Coe was dismissed from the pastorate June 1, 1864, on account of failing health, and after leaving Danbury preached in Ridgefield for four years, and supplied the Second Presbyterian church at Cleveland, O., for six months. He died at New Haven, December 7, 1869.

On June 12, 1865, the church requested the society to unite with them in extending a call to Rev. Alvah L. Frisbie, who was then at Ansonia. The society concurred, and Dr. Frisbie accepted the call and was formally installed Wednesday, July 19, 1865. It was during his pastorate that the present organ was secured, the cost being $3,500. Dr. Frisbie closed his labors with the church September 20, 1871, accepting a call to the pastorate of the First Congregational church, of Des Moines, Iowa, where he has ever since labored with marked success.

Dr. Frisbie is remembered by many of the present membership, among whom he has hosts of friends. It is an occasion for regret that he cannot be present with us at this celebration. As

a preacher he has marked ability, and holds an honored place in the denomination.

It was two years before the vacancy occasioned by Mr. Frisbie's removal was filled by a call extended to Rev. Joel J. Hough, of Franklin, N. Y. Mr. Hough began his labors with the church October 12, 1873, and was installed November 19 of the same year. During his period of service, the main audience room, Sunday-school and social rooms were improved and refurnished at considerable expense. His pastorate of five years was one of solid growth, during which large additions were made to the membership. Mr. Hough is remembered and spoken of to this day as being the best sermonizer the church has had for its pulpit. Under his faithful ministry there was a quickening along the lines of benevolent work, the contributions to missionary purposes being nearly doubled.

Mrs. Hough was greatly interested in all lines of church work, and will long be remembered for the prominent part which she took in the various organizations of the church. The Woman's Foreigh Missionary society which she was instrumental in organizing will long stand as a monument to her memory. It is a great pleasure for us to have Mr. and Mrs. Hough with us upon this jubilee occasion. Mr. Hough's pastorate ended Dec. 19, 1878.

After leaving Danbury he became pastor of the church at Antwerp, N. Y., and later at Berkshire, N. Y., in which relation he now continues.

After Mr. Hough's removal, Rev. Jas. W. Hubbell was elected pastor and was installed May 20, 1879. Some of the largest accessions to the membership known to the church were made during his pastorate. He was also instrumental in organizing the Christian Endeavor society, and in instituting our present system of weekly offerings. Mr. Hubbell's pastorate closed Oct. 23, 1886, when he accepted a call to the Congregational church of Mansfield, Ohio.

Dr. Hubbell was born in Wilton, in this state, a little more than sixty years ago. He was the second son of Deacon Wakeman Hubbell, and a younger brother Rev. Henry L. Hubbell, DD., at the present time president of the Lake Charles College, in Louisiana. Mr. Hubbell prepared for college at the Wilton academy, and graduated at Yale in the class of 1857, and at the Andover Theological seminary five or six years later. After preaching for a time in Plainville he became pastor of the First church in Milford, Conn., then of the College street church, New Haven, then of the Congregational church of Portsmouth N. H. It was from this last charge that he was called to Danbury.

"He was a man of graceful speech and native eloquence, always knowing the right thing to say and saying it. Bright and humorous and impressive, he was an acceptable speaker, not only in the pulpit, but outside of it, and upon all manner of occasions.

"His especial strength lay in the possession of a most genial and affectionate spirit. His sympathies were rich and warm, flowing forth readily to all sorts and conditions of men, giving him an interest in everything that concerns human welfare, binding others to him and making them his friends forever. Excellent as a preacher, it was as a pastor that he was pre-eminent, by his personal influence, winning to the high standards of duty and privilege that were his own. Few ministers of the gospel are more generally and deeply loved than was he."

After a painful illness Dr. Hubbell passed away from this life at his home in Mansfield, Ohio, May 19, 1896. His body was taken to Brooklyn and laid to rest in Greenwood cemetery, Rev. Dr. R. S. Storrs officiating at the service. On motion of the Mansfield church, Messrs. F. E. Tracey, A. A. Peck, and S. B. Leiter accompanied the body of Dr. Hubbell to Brooklyn,—these three gentlemen being the ones who came to Danbury ten years ago to invite Dr. Hubbell to accept the

pastorate of the Mansfield church.

Rev. J. Allen Maxwell, D. D., was the next pastor of the church, being installed May 19, 1887. Dr. Maxwell was born in New York city on Dec. 29, 1833. He was graduated at the University of the City of New York and at Union Theological seminary. His first pastorate was the Presbyterian church of South Orange, N. J. He was afterwards pastor of the Presbyterian churches in Hazelton, Penn., Bridgeton, N. J., and Titusville, Penn. One of his sons, Rev. Irving Maxwell, is the pastor of the Presbyterian church at Oxford, N. J. Dr. Maxwell was a scholar of acknowledged ability, whose literary and sermonic work was of a high order of excellence. He was also a kind and sympathetic pastor. It was during his ministry that the present parsonage was erected. After a brief illness, he died on Thanksgiving day, November 27, 1890, and his body lies in Wooster cemetery, making the sixth pastor of the First church whose remains have been interred in this field of their former labors.

The wife of Dr. Maxwell now resides in Bridgeton, N. J., where she is the owner and principal of Ivy Seminary, a school for young ladies, which for many years has had national reputation.

The present pastorate was begun October 15, 1891.

There have been fifteen pastors of this church, Dr. Frisbie and Dr. Hough being the only ex-pastors now living. The longest pastorate was thirty-nine years, that of Rev. Seth Shove; the shortest, three years, that of Noadiah Warner. The average length, twelve years. In the interim between the pastorates there have been a number of supplies, the principal ones being Rev. Ebenezer Bradford, from April 9th, 1777, to Nov. 22d, 1779, and Rev. John Rogers, D. D., from April 11th, 1780, to Jan. 2d, 1782. The Rev. Dr. Rogers had as salary the use of the house left the society by Mr. Baldwin, and for the rest he relied on the generosity of the people.

Mr. Thomas Robbins was not a pastor, as has been quite generally supposed, but simply supplied during the illness of Rev. Mr. Langdon. He, however, bears too important a relation to the history of our church and town to be passed over without special mention.

He was born in 1777 in Norfolk, of this state. He graduated from Yale in 1796. In 1799 he accepted a call to the Congregational church in Brookfield, as a temporary supply. As the parish was too poor to pay for a preacher through the winter, and receiving a call to teach the public school in Danbury, he left Brookfield and arrived here on December 25th.

He must have created a remarkably favorable impression upon the people, for although a stranger and only twenty-two years old, a committee of citizens invited him to deliver a eulogy on the character of Washington, who had just died. He delivered the discourse to an audience that completely filled the meeting house of the Congregational church. This all took place within a week after his arrival.

While Mr. Robbins remained in Danbury he boarded with Matthew Beale Whittlesey, a noted lawyer, and father of the late Ebenezer Whittlesey. While here he often preached in the Congregational church, the settled pastor, Rev. Mr. Langdon, being ill with consumption. He did not become a settled pastor until after he left the town. In 1844, after teaching and preaching for forty-five years, he retired from active life and became librarian of the Connecticut Historical society in Hartford, which position he held until 1854. He died in Colbrook September 13, 1856, and was buried in Hartford.

Mr. Robbins was but twenty-three years of age when he preached the now famous century sermon. He never married. But this apparently was not his fault. While here, he fell in love with an accomplished young lady, who did not return his passion. She afterward married Knapp Boughton, and in course of time became the

mother of our late fellow citizen, Lucius H. Boughton.

The following extracts from Mr. Robbins' diary may be interesting:

"Dec. 31st—In the forenoon no school for want of wood. Wrote on my oration. Adieu. 1799."

"Feb. 18th—Am invited out to tea almost every day."

The latter is suggestive of the hospitality which still prevails in Danbury.

Feb. 25th, we find this significant entry: "It is customary here for little children to have dances, even the youngest of my school."

"April 5th, dined with the military company. The militia here appears very well. Training here on the Green to-day. In the evening all hands danced. Even the least of my school joined the game. No less than four sets (companies) are dancing this evening."

Evidently Danbury has not lost its early love for educated heels.

Again, "Sept. 1st—Had no school, it being Training Day. The greater part of my school children danced. It being customary here, I cannot prevent it."

Like all other sensible ministers, he seems to have given it up as a bad job. Here is an entry of another sort: "May 25, 1812. Received a new hat from Danbury for which I paid ten dollars. It is all beaver." "May 4. Received a good hat from Danbury by New York, for which I paid seven dollars." There are manufacturers in town now who would like to have plenty of orders at ten dollars per dozen, but I fear Mr. Robbins wouldn't find them as serviceable as the good old beavers he wore.

Mr. Robbins' father and grandfather were both ministers.

Here is an item concerning his grandfather, which is a lively commentary on the christian fellowship which existed during the last century:

In 1742, Mr. Philemon Robbins, a minister of the standing order in Branford, preached by invitation to the Baptist church in Wallingford; for this the ministers of the New Haven Consociation called him to account, and his trial was continued for a long time. In 1745, they called him before them and demanded "that he should confess that he broke the law of God in preaching to Baptists against their consent."

Imagine my exchanging with Dr. Hubbard after such a deliverance of the fathers as that!

For sixty nine years, the First church was the only church in the town. The "New Danbury Church," under Rev. Mr. White was formed in 1764. In 1765, a Sandemanian church was organized which in 1790, divided, one portion adopting immersion as a mode of baptism, and for a time bearing the name of the Baptist Sandemanians

The next society was the Protestant Episcopal. There were families of this persuasion in town in the early part of the 18th century and services were held as early as 1728. A church building was erected in 1763, but services were only occasionally held. The formal organization did not occur until 1784.

The first Baptist church located at King Street was organized in 1785. A Second Baptist society was organized in Miry Brook in 1788, and was re-organized in 1790 becoming the Second Baptist church of Danbury.

The Methodist Episcopal church was not organized until 1808, but had services here as early as 1789. Rev. Jesse Lee preached the first Methodist sermon heard in the town, and at that time such was the feeling against the Methodists that he found no place where he could be entertained until a tavern keeper took pity upon him and gave him shelter for the night. This tavern keeper's name was Starr, and he afterward became a trustee of the first society organized.

As indicative of the sectarian spirit in the years of our fathers, the following may be related: Rev. Dr. J. B. Floy, a Methodist minister, who came to the city in 1842, created quite an impression whereupon the pastor of the First church from his pulpit on the Sabbath said, "Some ministers can

come to town and make a great deal of fuss and then not stay hardly long enough to take off their saddle bags."

On the following Sabbath, Dr. Floy in response said: "It would be a great deal better if some ministers didn't stay long enough to take off their saddle bags."

The Disciples church was organized in 1817, and with one exception is the oldest church of that order in the United States. It was organized by four members who formerly belonged to the "New Danbury Church."

The next church organized was the Universalist, in 1822. The first sermon of that faith preached in Danbury was by Hosea Ballou in 1807.

The Roman Catholic church held services in this city as early as 1834, but it was not until 1853 that they became permanently established. The present rector, Rev. Henry J. Lynch, has sent a beautiful letter of congratulation to the pastor of this church upon the celebration which we are now observing.

The Second Congregational church was organized in 1851.

There was a Congregational church organized in Mill Plain in 1851, but after a few years of varied history, it gradually ceased to exist.

The German Lutherans held preaching services as early as 1877, but were not constituted a church until 1881.

There is a Christian church in King Street; a Second Adventist church, an A. M. E. Zion church, and other organizations in the city.

The original members of the First church came almost entirely from Norwalk, which, therefore, we call our mother.

There have been five churches directly organized from this: New Fairfield in 1742, Brookfield Center in 1757, Bethel in 1760, Ridgebury in 1769 and Second church, Danbury, in 1851. Ridgebury may claim a mixed parentage, a large portion coming from Ridgefield.

Twenty-two members were dismissed from this church in 1851, to form the Second Congregational church. This was by the consent of the First church but against its advice and judgment. For a number of years there were repeated attempts to induce the Second church to return to its old home. These efforts not only signally failed, but there afterward grew up such a bitter feeling between the two organizations, that when the present meeting house of the Second church was dedicated, though nearly every other church and society in town contributed a memorial window for its benefit, the First church declined to assist in any way. It is pleasant to record that the old feeling has passed away and the two churches now exist in perfect harmony.

This church has furnished at least nine candidates for the ministry, Nathaniel Taylor, James Beebe, Ebenezer R. White, Benjamin Wildman, Noah Benedict, John Langdon, Samuel Cook and Starr H. Nichols. John Deans graduated this month from Yale Theological seminary.

Four of our members became missionaries. Rev. Ard Hoyt and his niece Dolly Hoyt, were prominent as missionaries among the Cherokee Indians; Amos S. Cooke, son of Dea. J. P. Cooke, went as a missionary teacher to the Sandwich Islands in 1836, and from 1839 to 1842 had charge of a government school in which the children of the chiefs were educated; Mary J. Crofut, as the wife of Rev. A. B. Morse, went as a missionary to Siam.

The following ministers have chosen for themselves wives from among the membership of the church: Jeremiah Day was married to Lucy Wood, Rev. Moses Stuart to Abigail Clark, Dev. Dr. Strong to Laura Clark, Rev. Samuel Merwin to Clarissa Taylor, Rev. Dr. Condit to Harriett Whittlesey, Rev. Mr. Armiston to Eveline Comstock, Rev. Joel Brackett to Mabel Carrington, Rev. Chauncey Wilcox to Sarah Cooke, Rev. G. L. Brownell to Mary Whittlesey, Rev. Platt Holley to Julia A. Whittlesey, Rev. Dr. Willis Lord to Hannah Boughton, Rev. Oliver St. John to Elizabeth Bull, Rev. I. W. Andrews to Sarah H. Clarke, Rev. I. W.

Andrews to Anna S. Clarke, Rev. Dr. Haskins to Lucy Wildman, Rev. Mr. Deere to Louisa Downing, Rev. A. B. Morse to Mary J. Crofut, Rev. Dr. Hawks to Mrs. Olivia T. Hunt, Rev. E. Cooke to Martha Smith, Rev. Mr. Bardwell to Miriam Wood, Rev. Dr. Ludlow to Maria Tappan, Rev. John Lockwood to Sarah Bennett, Rev. Mr. Marshall to Mariette Crosby, Rev. A. L. Frisbie to Martha J. Crosbie.

This church has entertained the state Association five times (1759, 1815, 1839, 1852, 1875,) and the General Conference in 1885. It has also furnished hospitality to the State S. S. association upon two different occasions.

Fairfield East Association held its first meeting after organization in Danbury March 4th. 1734-5.

From the records I find that the Fairfield East Consociation from 1763 to 1859 met nine times in Danbury to sit in counsel upon cases of church discipline.

There have been thirty-four deacons of the church of whom the six marked by * are still living.

Samuel Benedict,	Thomas Tucker,
James Beebe,	Eliakim Starr,
John Gregory,	Ezra Boughton,
Richard Barnum,	Lewis S. Hoyt,
Joseph Gregory,	Oliver Stone,
James Beebe,	Isaac Ives,
James Benedict,	John F. Beard,
John Benedict,	John Fry.
Nathaniel Gregory,	Eli T. Hoyt,
Joseph Peck,	Judah P. Crosby,
Daniel Benedict,	*Harvey Williams,
Thomas Benedict,	*George Downs,
Joseph P. Cook, Sr.,	*George McArthur,
Joshua Knapp,	Edgar A. Benedict,
Samuel Wildman,	*W. A. Gordon,
Amos Hoyt,	*M. P. Reynolds,
Joseph P. Cook, Jr.,	*E. E. Harrison.

From the society's record, I make the following extracts which will give us an insight into some of the old time customs:

"At a meeting held on June 1st, 1754, the church by vote do appoint and empower Thomas Benedict, Captain Daniel Taylor, Captain John Wood, or Either Two of them to be a Committee with full power to ask for and receive into their Care and Custody the Silver Basen belonging to this church for the Use of the Table for the Sacrement of the Lords Super as platters, flaggins, Cups. Juggs, lining, &c., and the Same to hold and secure for the Use of the Church."

"At a Society Meeting held January 3d, 1755, it was voted that the piue Madame White uesed to Set in shall bare in Dignity with the piue opposite and be Reckned as one in Dignity with sd Seat. The Middle piue in the alley to be Reckned Next after the third in Dignity, according to the formour Dignifying of seats; and the hind piue in the alley to be Reckned next after the Fourth Dignity, according to the Old Seatting; the rest to be as formourly Dignifyed and the number of persons to be put into The new piues to be left with the Society Committee to order and Give Directions to the Committee who are to seat sd house.

"Att sd meatting, Deac. Joseph Peck and Deac. Daniel Benedict moving to the Society for a Seat in sd Seatting, votes that sd Deacons have the liberty of setting in the fore seat, in case the Deacons Seat Cant be made convenient to their esceptence. Att sd. meeting Mr. Halley and Mr. Willey Voted to set in the 2 long seat, Mr. Ambler to Set in the piue on the left hand of the End Doer, Mr. Clark to St in the Same, Mr. Bennit in the Seat below the pillar Seat; Mr. John Trowbridg in the piue the Right Side the End Doer, also Mr. Daniel Comstock in the same piue.

"Att sd. meeting the Society by Vote allow Mr. Daniel Taylor his Request to Set in the fore seat in liue of ye first piue.

"Att sd. meeting Isaac Hoyt undertook to Tell people where to Sett after Seatting for £0.—2—0."

"At a Society Meeting held in the Prime Society, December 22d, A. D. 1755, voted, that ur. Adam Clark Set in the piue on the South side of the End Door his wife accordingly against him."

Voted also that Mr. John Trowbridg

Set in piue with Mr. Clark his wife accordingly against him."

"At a Society Meeting legally warned held in Danbury, December the 14th, A. D. 1756. Capt. John Benedict Modcrator. The meeting house to be Sweept was lett to Dann'l Starr for 0-19-9.

"The meeting by Vote is adjourned to the 21 of Instant December at 9 of the clock in the four Noon."

Our fathers held meeting in the morning, we in the evening.

"The Society by Vote appoint the Great or first Pue to be the place for Daniel Taylor, Esqr. and his wife to Set for the futer."

"The Society by Vote order the Great or Pue Next to the Deacons Seat be the Place for the following aged women to Set, viz; the two aged widdow Hoyts, Eunice Starr, Miss Hannah Hill and Elenor Weed."

"The Society by Vote order that Deac. Daniel Benedict Set in the Great or first Pue.

"The Society by Vote order that all those Persons that have Neaver been Seated in the Meeting House Shall bring in an account of their age to the Comtee, within ye space of one weak from this Time in order they may be Seated thereon."

Here is something about Concert Hall.

At a meeting of the First Society in Danbury, held on May 21st, 1787, "The Question was put whether the Society will proceed to Glaze the Meeting House, lay the lower floors, plaister the whole body of the House except under the Gallery floors, make a partition & Door between the House and Steple, erect the pillows under the Gallery girts, case the windows and posts of the House Glaze the Steeple and lay the under floor of the same. Past in the affirmative."

At a society meeting held January 7, 1796, it was "Voted to seat the meeting house by the following rule (viz) multiply each persons age by ten and to that product add the list of each person for the year 1795 including one head in each list whether actually in the list or not and no more.

"That men and their wives be seated together and that people have their choice of a seat according to their respective footings.

"Voted that Col. Cooke, Esq. Whittlesey, John McLean, Comfort Hoyt Junr. and Col. Taylor be a Comtee to receive the Ages and make out footings.

"Voted that People give in their Ages by the first day of February next.

"Voted that the Pew next the Pulpit stairs be reserved for the Minister's family and the one next the Pulpit the east side and the first and second seat next the East Alley be reserved for widows & strangers."

Singing has always formed a prominent part in the worship of this church. How we should feel to be compelled to go back now to the ways of the fathers, I cannot tell.

The first mention I find upon the records runs as follows:

In 1767 "Mr. John Trowbridge, Mr. David Whitlock, Ensign Eleazer Starr, Mr. Philip Corbin and Mr. James Bradley, are, by vote, Desired to take Cair and Tune the Psalms in our Publick worship."

At a Society meeting held December 26th, 1770, "Nathnl Ketchum, Daniel Taylor, Junr. and Daniel Wood were appointed Quorristers with the other appointed to Tune the Psalm in Publick worship in this Society."

"Voted to give Ebenezer Munson his last years Rate."

In regard to church music I find numerous votes, some of them going back more than a hundred years. In 1773 Jared Patchen was by vote of the society appointed to "tune the psalms" and allowed to "sit in the front seat in the gallery." In 1785 the society voted that the chorister be requested to continue singing in what is called the "new way." In 1829 the sum of $30 was voted to the singing society for the encouragement of singing. Two years later the sum voted was $50, which continued the regular appropriation until 1846. On the advent of the pipe

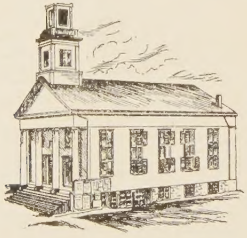
organ the sum was increased to $100, and then it was $100 and $50 additional for the organist. It has continued to increase until the expenditure for music is now $1,300 per year.

Among the remembered choristers was Mr. Horace Bull. "He was a noted singer and for over 30 years held the position of chorister in this church. He was the first milk peddler Danbury had, peddling on the street from a cart and ringing a bell. A tribute to Mr. Bull's musical talent was a remark Judge Dutton, then of the Superior Court, made when in Danbury. He said: 'I heard Mr. Bull ringing his bell this morning, and there was really music in it.'"

I am deeply conscious of the limitations and failings of this sketch.

I have said little or nothing about the church membership, deacons, and other officers, the Sunday school and various organizations. These are to be presented in separate papers at another meeting, and I have restrained myself for fear of encroaching upon the ground rightfully belonging to those who shall prepare these reports.

We have taken a brief and imperfect view of the past 200 years. Much of the record of the fathers has never been written and can never be told. They were men of narrow views in some respects, but of lofty purpose and sterling character. Their toils, struggles, sacrifices, prayers, counsels, faith and patience have entered into the long process through which this community has become what it is. Their work is seen in the material, moral, intellectual and spiritual wellbeing which we recognize today. From the height of this jubilee occasion let us turn toward the future, and seek to so live that we may pass the heritage to our children without the loss of a single element which enters into its glory.



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